

Message Text

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EA/LC/LMRIVES

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R 192249Z OCT 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

S E C R E T STATE 208018

THE FOLLOWING TEL FROM VIENTIANE OCT 17, 73 TO SECSTATE
WASHDC INFO BANGKOK PHNOM PENH SAIGON PARIS CINCPAC AND USSAG
NKP IS REPTED:

QTE S E C R E T VIENTIANE 7146

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER

1. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY STEARNS AND I MET WITH
PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA THIS MORNING. STEARNS
GAVE SOUVANNA A QUICK RUNDOWN ON THE SITUATION IN
CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIETNAM, STRESSING THE FRAGILITY OF
THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE CONTINUING HIGH LEVEL
OF VIOLENCE IN VIETNAM. HE DESCRIBED TO SOUVANNA THE
INTENSE ENGINEER EFFORT MADE BY THE NVA ON THE TRAIL
SYSTEM AND IN SOUTH VIETNAM THIS YEAR, BUT NOTED THAT
IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO FORETELL WHETHER THE NVA PLANNED
A MAJOR OFFENSIVE IN THE COMING DRY SEASON. THERE WERE
IN FACT SOME INDICATIONS THAT ISSUE WAS CURRENTLY UNDER

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DISCUSSION IN HANOI.

2. TURNING TO THE SITUATION IN WASHINGTON, STEARNS DESCRIBED CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. FOLLOWING UP ON THIS EMBASSY'S EARLIER TALK WITH SOUVANNA (VIENTIANE 5769 NOTAL), HE DISCUSSED WITH SOUVANNA THE LEGAL BASIS FOR CONTINUING U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RECENTLY SIGNED PROTOCOL AND THE 1962 GENEVA ACCORDS. SOUVANNA STATED THAT HE FORESAW NO PROBLEM FOR RLG WITH REGARD TO RECEIVING CONTINUED U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE. HE COMMENTED THAT HE HAD ALREADY SENT THE EMBASSY A LETTER CONFIRMING HIS DESIRE TO CONTINUE TO RECEIVE THIS ASSISTANCE IN THE FUTURE. HE SEEMED SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT NO SUCH LETTER HAD BEEN RECEIVED AND SAID HE WOULD CHECK. STEARNS SAID LETTER WOULD BE HELPFUL IN OUR CONTINUING CONSIDERATION OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

3. SOUVANNA EXPLAINED TO STEARNS THAT HE CONTINUED TO HOPE THAT RECONCILIATION WITH THE OTHER SIDE WAS FEASIBLE. HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHED TO THE TONE OF THE RELATIONSHIP NOW BEING ESTABLISHED AND HIS DESIRE TO BE AS FORTHCOMING AS POSSIBLE, RECOGNIZING THE VERY REAL MISTRUST AND APPREHENSION WHICH EXISTED ON BOTH SIDES. SOUVANNA SAID THAT ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE JCIA WERE PROVING TO BE A HEAVY FINANCIAL BURDEN AND HE HAD SEVERAL TIMES REQUESTED U.S. ASSISTANCE TO HELP HIM THROUGH THIS FINANCIAL PROBLEM. WHEN WE NOTED THE DESIRABILITY OF REQUESTING ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES, SOUVANNA STATED THAT HE HAD ALREADY APPROACHED POMPIDOU AND WOULD CONTACT THE SOVIETS AS SOON AS THE RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR RETURNS. HE WAS ALSO GOING TO SOLICIT CHINESE HELP.

4. SOUVANNA INQUIRED WHETHER SURPLUS U.S. VEHICLES IN THAILAND COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO HIM FOR JCIA USE. I STATED THAT THERE WERE FEW, IF ANY, VEHICLES IN THAILAND BUT THAT WE WOULD BE PLEASED TO HELP REPAIR SOME OF THE MANY FAR VEHICLES WHICH ARE CURRENTLY DEADLINED AND WHICH SHOULD BE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO MEET HIS NEEDS.

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SOUVANNA APPEARED TO BE SATISFIED WITH THIS SOLUTION BUT HE IS CLEARLY VERY CONCERNED OVER THE UNFORESEEN BUDGETARY COST OF HIS PRESENT POLITICAL EFFORT.

5. SOUVANNA WAS CLEARLY DELIGHTED TO SEE STEARNS AGAIN AND THIS VISIT HAS PROVED TO BE MOST TIMELY AND HELPFUL TO US.

WHITEHOUSE

UNQTE KISSINGER

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NNN

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